

## XIX: Racial Qualifications for Benefits



ND now I come to one of the most important chapters in this book. How are we going to handle the Negro problem, the Mexican problem, the alien problem, the Indian problem, the problem of the constitutionally improvident? From where are our domestic servants to be recruited, or the hired hands necessary during seasonable farm work? What is going to take the place of that great mass of unskilled laborers that has been a headache to provident humanity since the beginning of time and yet is no less useful or necessary for getting the menial work of the world accomplished? Are we to shovel out monthly benefits to hordes of persons, just because a lucky accident caused them to be born in the United States, supporting them in idleness if they do not choose to work, patiently tolerating those types and temperaments that drift along from year to year, satisfied to make enough just to keep body and soul together and not bothering their pates over anything better? It is something to think about.

It would be one thing, the reasonable person agrees, to install an ideal Commonwealth program if all the citizens living under it were inclined to be thrifty, industrious, law respecting, and respectably proud, eager each one to maintain his prestige among his fellows, and do-

ing his part toward the common welfare insofar as he was able. It will be quite another thing to take human nature as we find it—good, bad and indifferent—and say that we can penalize the thrifty, industrious, sensible and respectable, by asking them to contribute toward the support of vast numbers who will only work when hunger drives them to work and who “loaf and go fishing” the moment they get a few paltry dollars to maintain their existence.

Especially in the South we have the Negro problem. It is not exactly the Negro problem that we confront in the North, and respectable, intelligent colored people will understand perfectly why I make the distinction. In the North we have the better class of Negro, the man who, with the exception of certain elements that have congregated in great cities like Chicago, is well-nigh white beneath his skin, who conforms to the white law and behaves after the white psychology in most social intercourse. In the South we have a pardonably primitive creature, lethargic by temperament, congenitally lazy, content to live in a rickety cabin his life around, and lay off from any employment offered him the moment he has received enough to buy him a few groceries and a bottle of “corn.” It would be imbecility to give such a person a minimum of \$83 monthly dividend. Racial quandaries would at once arise among southern whites that would work almost as much social havoc as would the Negro as a pauper. Furthermore, liberally supplying the constitutionally improvident, white or black, with living-funds, only to have them write their monthly cheques for stakes in crap games, would be still more flouting of the Christian economic program.

Anyone too, with a statesmanlike grasp on social funda-



mentals, must realize that disposing of the problem of 8,000,000 adult aliens, together with their hapless progeny, by declaring off-hand that they will be deported back to their native countries all at once, is the sheerest necromancy. If we shipped them out of America 2,000 at a boatload, it would require something more than 4,000 vessels to transport them, or a fleet making hundreds of separate voyages. These people cannot be herded into permanent concentration camps, as a war of comparative short duration might make possible. We cannot callously leave them to starve. Naturalizing them by shoving them through a gigantic naturalization hopper would be a travesty on American civics.

Out in the southwest, and up and down the California coast, are thousands of resident Mexicans but one step removed from Indians. They cling instinctively to aboriginal conditions of living and fight all attempts to introduce them to facilities of modern sanitation and convenience. It was not so long ago that the Santa Fe Railroad engaged in an altruistic gesture and determined to build reasonably comfortable cottage homes for its Mexican section hands. Neat box houses were constructed all along the railroad's right-of-way. As soon as the builders had departed and assignments of these cottages had been made, the Mexicans either went out in each backyard, put up an adobe mud hut and lived in it as formerly, or they tore up the floors in the modern cottages, threw them out in the yards and wallowed as before on the dirt of the ground.

Handling such classes of people is an enigma in any State. Down in the southern mountains there are "white folks" who vacated the cottages which Mrs. Roosevelt tried to construct for them and hied them-

selves back to their mud-chinked log cabins as quickly as they could, selling the utensils which the CWA paternity furnished them, and breathing sighs of satisfaction as they clustered once more around a tawdry cabin fireplace instead of modern stoves.

Too many inexperienced altruists accept that this sort of reaction to progress and improvement is a sign of degeneration, or proof of the hopelessness of making anything worth while out of humanity in general. They want all the "lower classes" at once to abide by their own notions of what living conditions should be, and expect that a family jerked from a hovel and placed in a commodious and equipped modern residence will react in its habits and behavior like others to the manor born. When they will not, when reflexes from generations of poverty and circumscription make them tend back to their own norm of social and domestic deportment, these inexperienced altruists and sociologists are seized with a vast discouragement and the poor folk whom they seek to help, but by no means understand, come in for a blanket berating which only makes the social strain worse.

Sensible men and women, with the brains to plot out a better system of economics than the water tank fallacy, must exercise those brains and take note of such elements. They must understand the motives behind them in their seeming animalistic conduct, and be compassionate and analytical in educating them slowly and constructively. As a matter of fact, most of the older generation among such castes and classes is well-nigh hopeless of regeneration anyhow, and the fact might as well be faced. Even as it was the younger Mexican generation that put the wooden floors back into the Santa Fe



cottages when the old folks had died off, observing for itself the better rank and title it gave them among their white neighbors, so it must be the rising generation that we bring up to a 14-year educational system and supply with the correct instruction instead of the mass of useless academic bilge that is termed education today in the interests of the water tank industrialists of the fable, that we count on for gradually overcoming the general poverty of the "lower classes" throughout the nation. ¶ The wise statesman takes note of all these factors. He overcomes them by setting up conditions to which people conform without always realizing that they are conforming. It makes such conformity the "popular thing to do." But if he be truly wise, he does not expect to accomplish his purposes all in one gesture. Nor does he detail his social stipulations too minutely. In the present situation, however, it is necessary to create some sort of structure that provides attention, education and physical sustenance for such castes and classes, without enslaving or regimenting them, in sheer self defense of the Commonwealth program as it applies to those not so handicapped by instinct and tradition. How to do it? The answer, like all the other answers to the Commonwealth proposals, is simple—

The castes and classes represented by the indolent Southern Negro, the Mexican Indian, the undeportable alien, the illiterate and improvident backwoods white, the constitutionally improvident and shiftless, known to be such by their more industrious and respectable neighbors in any district, become wards of the Commonwealth, under the Department of the Interior, on much the same basis as the affairs of our Indians are now handled, but minus the present exploitation features.



UNDERSTAND that in the fundamental setup of the Commonwealth a national census of a new and totally different order must be made. It would seem the most feasible and practical thing, to make the County the basis of this census-taking as well as of the later administration of the Commonwealth machinery. Thereby would counties assume a new importance in our political and social structure, whereas under present methods the county is gradually losing its value and significance. ¶ ¶

As this census is compiled—of the status and prospects of each domestic or personal unit for benefits to be received as the plan swings into action—it will be a comparatively simple matter to determine from such data, those who qualify under the stipulation of the Christian plan as hereinbefore set forth, and those not yet far enough evolved, intellectually or sociologically, to grasp "what it's all about." Then sincere and conscientious workers for the installation of this better economic arrangement would have small difficulty in discriminating—local conditions being fairly well known and estimated. ¶ ¶

Prospective beneficiaries who refuse to submit their data, or who cannot by reasons of incompetence or illiteracy, should be swiftly and ably allocated into a classification known as wards, to be treated with and disposed of as such by the county boards for improvidence!

In other words, it is a matter of raising the status and jurisdiction of the county agent or commissioner and his county farm officialdom, to greatly expanded and revitalized powers, commensurate with the additional numbers of persons brought under such protection, not



necessarily paupers but "constitutional dependents" on the Commonwealth's bounty.

In other words, it amounts to this: that by their own refusal or inability to comply with the stipulations of the Commonwealth for the economic metamorphosis of the whole American citizenry, such persons or citizens have thus automatically designated themselves as unfit to receive such benefits, and have exempted themselves from equitable participation in such benefits. Thereby are they self-styled as ineligible and unqualified, and until they do qualify in the estimate of the Commonwealth's more enlightened representatives, they must be treated as wards of the nation exactly as Indians of our western reservations are treated today. Only instead of being concentrated under one Indian Agent and his deputies on a specific reservation, such persons may be scattered on certain "public lands"—meaning real estate—all over a given county. Within such jurisdiction their individual eccentricities or improvidences would be disclosed and studied. The territory encompassed within a given jurisdiction would thus be small enough to permit of individual investigation and treatment of cases in point. ❖ ❖



UT consider the plight of such people if they elect not to come under the jurisdiction and investigation and recommendations of such Commonwealth County Boards. If they refuse absolutely to bear any economic responsibility in the Commonwealth, they cannot market or sell their crops or other local products except to individuals in isolated cases, and even in that event they can only receive bank cheques in payment, which are non-negotiable and can only be used through the Treasury Banks of the Commonwealth itself. This means that to even enjoy the increment from disposing of a dozen eggs and a gallon of corn, they must present themselves at the Commonwealth Bank and open a bank account. If they are willing to labor and are yet too illiterate to follow the ramifications of the Commonwealth in its social machinery, they can be quickly and intelligently allocated in lucrative jobs the year around by the County overseers. To all intents and purposes they are economic paupers in their respective localities, under the social onus of such classification, and yet able and eligible to climb out of it at any given moment that they choose, by reasonable conformity with the Commonwealth's economic fiats! ¶ Under the Commonwealth's provision for treating the whole citizenry as an economic unit, it means that common schools will no longer be a financial drain on the individual taxpayer, so there need be no limit to the number of schools provided for the education of the youngsters of these persons. At these schools a system of education should be taught that I am going to outline and suggest for the approval of my more enlightened fellow citizens in a future volume. Thus, automatically



the rising generation of these people will be assisted out of the old shiftless habits of living and thinking merely by the environment that is being precipitated to force them along in the correct direction.

This outlining of the new educational curriculum under the Christian Commonwealth is adamantly important, since it will do no good to install such a better program for our bedeviled citizens of the present and then have the education of their children in our schools proceed along the old water tank philosophies. I have given no little thought to this matter in the curriculum that I advanced for the students of Galahad College in North Carolina during the summer months of 1932, and shall endeavor to issue a volume similar to this one on the subject as the whole people of our country become acquainted with the munificent advantages of the Commonwealth program.

As the demands for unskilled labor in any county district are known to the Federal officials therein, it will be no difficult task to offer such employment to the Commonwealth's "wards" and compensate them accordingly. The federal Department of the Interior, vastly increased in scope and size, will then be in a position, having all the known data of such cases under its jurisdiction, to make recommendations for the allotments of goods-credits to such districts and have them allotted much after the pattern that Uncle Sam follows on his Indian Reservations now.

This means in effect, that the great slovenly mass of the indolent and illiterate Negro populations of the South fall within a classification and under a jurisdiction which should have been installed promptly on the liberation of the Negro from slavery at the close of the war be-

tween the States. Socially controlled as a unit, the improvement of these colored persons can be pursued intelligently and efficiently instead of by the devil-may-care, rule-of-thumb methods obtaining since the break-up of the Confederacy. Southern people themselves would welcome such a solution of this well-nigh imponderable racial enigma.

If it be argued that human abuses would creep into any such system, that thereby the Negro himself might be reduced to a state of peonage, the answer is that no system ever evolved in a mortal world can be one-hundred-percent free from abuses; but as abuses usually have been a result of a stern economic duress in the past, those assigned to the management of such a "ward" program could not profit personally from such abuses and therefore they would be minimized automatically. Besides, the whole United States, by its very economic educational system, is undergoing a rebirth of social responsibilities. Depredations or persecutions by individuals would not long continue without discovery. Boards of Appeal for persons made to suffer inequities or iniquities, would soon adjust the human balance without working harm to any individual. After all, these wards are classed as such by their own improvidence. Let them stop their shiftless and indolent conduct, and they swiftly graduate from its indignities. At least they have a chance. Today they have no chance whatsoever. They are peons in fact, without the name.





HERE we would obtain our supply of domestic servants, is therefore no problem whatever. At no time nor in any place has it been specified herein, that if one person desired a servant to labor for him and was of a rating to compensate him, and another person or set of persons desired to work for the first and derive increment from such employment, that the Commonwealth program prohibited such employment. For instance, well-trained butlery is well-nigh a profession unto itself. It commands, and should receive, much higher compensation than the basic bank credit allowed to a ditch digger. There is nothing humiliating or menial about it. Waiters and waitresses, kitchen help, people to clean and scrub and polish, perform absolutely necessary functions in the body politic. Very good. Hire them. But compensate them through a more facile and equitable system.

The Department of Labor now maintains, in nearly every city and town in the land, what amounts to a Federal employment bureau. Why should it not be adequately used? Persons of unskilled qualifications but who do not care to be counted as wards of the County Boards, should list themselves with these Federal Employment Bureaus, which over a long period of time would become general clearing houses for labor of every description. If a person desires a servant, let him apply to such—with a great deal more safety as to character and abilities than maintains through the wild-cat employment agencies of the present, since the Commonwealth has each person's entire history and character-background to draw upon. It is part of the Commonwealth's data.

Very good. The servant is employed. If he be listed as a ward, or comes out of the ward class, such wages as were paid him would be tantamount to the basic Commonwealth Stock dividend for unskilled and employable persons who do qualify, or figured from that basis. Thus he would cease to be a ward by such employment. As his services commanded more than the Commonwealth provision, he would have such increase added to his Commonwealth bank account and made available for him to enjoy and expend in any given year. What could be simpler or more equitable to all parties? The employer writes a cheque on the Commonwealth Bank each Saturday night to cover such services and the servant deposits it to his own account precisely like bank practices of today. The sum is deducted from the employer's account and added to the employee's. The servant has a chance of increasing his buying power over any given year, by laboring, while at the same time the deductions from the mass of produced goods do not affect consumption balances. In practice, it amounts to the servant's consuming—by such transfer of credits—what the employer would otherwise be expected to consume. The chances of a glut at the top, therefore, are ultimately negated. And the glut is what the Commonwealth is basically seeking to provide against.

As for our undeportable alien population, we must take a statesmanlike attitude and look for our remedy in the education of the second generation over the proper span of time. It is undoubtedly true that thousands upon thousands of aliens would return to the countries of their nativity voluntarily, rather than remain in the United States under the Ward supervision. But for those who do not, the solution is simple.